

Submission
No 979

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

Subject: Submission on Birth Trauma

AUGUST 09 2023

Dear Members of the Committee,

I am writing to share my personal experiences and perspectives on behalf of women who have encountered birth trauma. As a woman who has personally experienced birth trauma I hope to shed light on the impact it can have on individuals and families.

I, _____, have experienced birth trauma firsthand. The specifics of my own encounter with birth trauma are as follows:

- My pregnancy went post dates and the OB at the hospital told me he felt uncomfortable with my choice not to induce. He had no experience supporting women with birthing post dates he said he “doesn’t allow it” and tried to scare me into an induction by saying ,my baby has double the risk of still birth which may be correct but the risk is still below 1%.
- Upon my waters breaking I was told I had to go to hospital immediately and spend 3 hrs hooked up to continuous monitoring in the middle of the night instead of resting. This was stressful and my baby was not stressed.
- I had to go into hospital the very next day first think on little rest to be hooked up to continuous monitoring again. I was not provided the evidence as to why? My baby was not stressed. It made me stressed however.
- After labouring at home for many hours in a beautiful loving and calm space I arrived at the hospital to a very grumpy and rude receptionist. They treated me and my husband with disrespect.
- My labour stalled in the hospital (because of the rude receptionist, bright lights and sterile environment). I was found to have meconium in my waters and was told I had to go on the syntocin drip despite this being something I was against and despite myself and my baby being absolutely fine with no sign of distress. My midwife knew I did not want augmentation but she still said I should do it. I was told it was dangerous if I didn’t. The nurse took a very long time to get the canula in and it was so painful. The wheels on the drip didn’t work properly and often It would get caught on the floor preventing my free movement and ripping the canula in my hand causing pain.
- I had to go on continuous monitoring as well for the entirety of my labour. This caused significant restriction in my movement and ability to use the shower for pain relief. I was devastated and in so much pain. It also distracted my midwife who frequently disrupted me to adjust the monitors it stopped me from going inward to use my hypnobirthing techniques to relieve pain. I was completely restricted form labouring the way I needed to and wanted to. I was alone and afraid.
- The contractions with the syntocin were excruciating and relentless. I had 5-10 second break between and they were unbearable. The dose of syntocin just went up and up. I was not dilating. How could I? I was completely stressed, overwhelmed and my baby was being forced.

- Despite having a sign on the door saying to please respect our hypno birthing space by keeping the room dark, remaining quite, to not disturb me to not just burst in the room and to keep chatter out of the room it was ignored by doctors
- I asked to not be told how many cm dilated I was on cervical checks and a doctor disrespected this and said the number anyway
- the epidural gave me an infection and caused my baby's heart rate to drop leading to a rushed pushing phase and eventual emergency c-section.
- The nurses in the post natal ward told me off for co-sleeping with my baby when it was the only way I could care for her as I was alone and recovering from surgery and couldn't move.
- Nurses frequently touched my breasts without my permission
- Nurses often gave their opinions on parenting without asking me if I wanted help first
- One nurse judged me for wanting to my silverette nipple covers to help my nipples. These profoundly helped me.
- One nurse was telling me about all of her stress and how a woman she was looking after produced a lot of breast milk when I was there struggling with my breast feeding. This was completely unprofessional a nurse should share info about other patients especially when it made me feel inadequate.
- The nurses did not weight my baby before we left the hospital and so missed that my baby was losing too much weight. This was very traumatising as when we got home 4 days later she was starving as my milk had not come in because of the c-section and all the drugs I was taking for pain relief

Drawing from my personal journey, I would like to propose specific solutions and changes to enhance maternity care in Australia, with the aim of preventing future instances of birth trauma. The following are the changes I advocate for:

- respect of the woman's right to a calm birthing space, respect her wishes for how the space needs to be and do not intervene unless absolutely medically necessary i.e. not just because it's the "hospital policy"
- support alternatives to get labour going again after it has stalled other than using syntocin
- if the baby and mother are not in distress then meconium in the waters is not a risk. Scare tactics should not be used to try and coerce a woman to accept syntocin or any augmentation of labour or the continuous monitoring. There is no evidence that these interventions improve birth outcomes for mothers in labour presenting with meconium stained liquor
- nurses need to be kind and calm. Also, not project their own personal stress that day which can distress and distract the birthing mother.

Thank you for considering my submission. I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute my experiences and viewpoints to the committees ongoing inquiry. If necessary, I am willing to provide additional evidence during a hearing to further support my perspective.

With sincere appreciation,